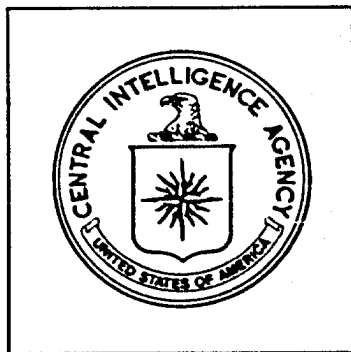


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East Asia
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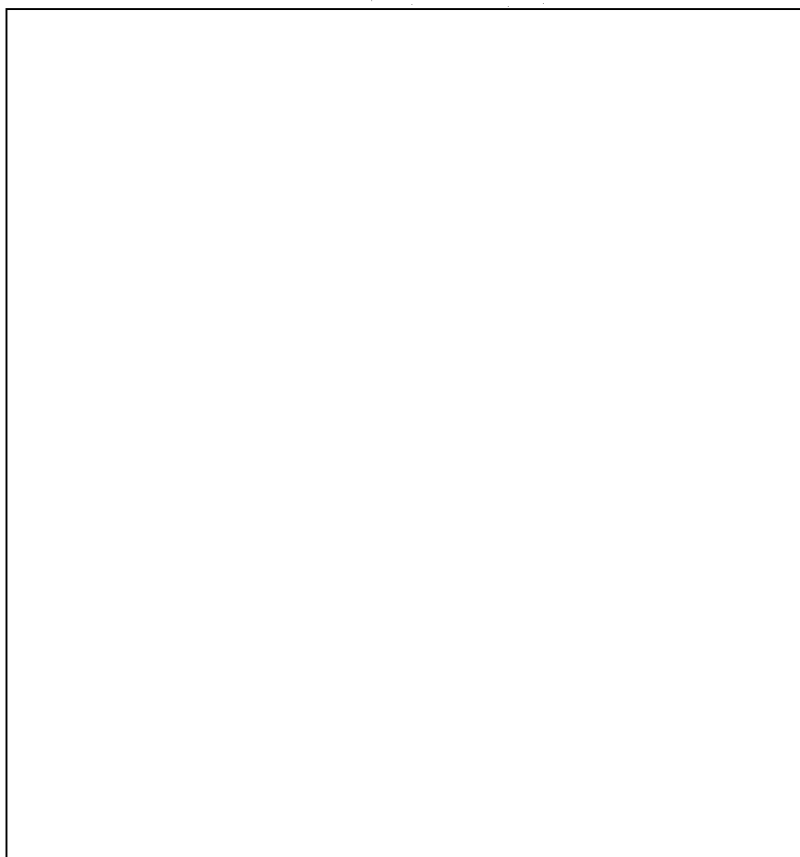
REGIONAL AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

~~Top Secret~~

212

RP AEA 77-009C

17 May 1977



~~Top Secret~~

EAST ASIA
SUPPLEMENT
17 May 1977

CONTENTS

Anti-Indonesian Tribal Warfare in Irian Jaya.	3
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RP AEA 77-009C

17 May 1977

~~Top Secret~~

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Anti-Indonesian Tribal Warfare in Irian Jaya

Widespread fighting between local tribesmen and Indonesian security forces in the Baliem Valley of Irian Jaya Province broke out in April. Instigated by the illegal Papua Independence Organization (OPM) and complicated by inter-tribal conflicts, the clashes attest to the continued hostility between the native population of the province and the growing Indonesian elite. Although Indonesia assumed the administration of Irian Jaya, formerly known as West New Guinea, from the Netherlands in 1963, Jakarta has done little to acculturate and develop the backward province in the ensuing years. A common Dutch colonial past is the only real link between Irian's primitive Melanesian tribal peoples and the Indonesian mainstream.

Until the recent incidents, foreign observers had considered the OPM largely moribund. Its leadership, which supports separation from Indonesia, was split over the course to be followed after attaining independence. The example of Indonesia's inability to subdue the separatists in Timor may have encouraged the OPM leaders to cooperate against the common enemy, leaving their long-term conflict for future resolution.

The offensive's coincidence with the recent Indonesian parliamentary election may have been a deliberate effort to highlight the denial to the Irianese of an effective voice in their affairs. Specific Irianese complaints include:

- The virtual monopolization of local government and civil service positions by ethnic Indonesians.
- Unequal job competition between the unskilled local peoples and the more advanced immigrants.

RP AEA 77-009C

17 May 1977

~~Top Secret~~

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--Economic discrepancies between the local tribal population and the Indonesian immigrants.

--Indonesian disregard for traditional land rights and local mores.

A letter from an expatriate OPM leader to a Papua New Guinea (PNG) newspaper presaged the new offensive. Accusing both Indonesian and US authorities of failing to respond to OPM demands for independence from Indonesia, it threatened to resort to terrorism to attract international attention.

[redacted] the OPM uses the PNG side of the joint border as a refuge and base for forays into Indonesian territory. PNG tolerance of the guerrillas, [redacted]

[redacted] has complicated relations between the two countries. Separated by an ill-defined border, the two countries are uneasy about each other's ultimate territorial intentions.

Indonesia fears that the example of an independent, relatively developed and prosperous PNG will encourage the Irian Jaya separatists. PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare's expression of admiration for the agricultural development model of the People's Republic of China further alarms the Sino-phobic leaders in Jakarta.

PNG, on the other hand, suspects that Indonesia may eventually intend to include the entire island within its borders. The annexation of former Portuguese Timor--like PNG, a former colony that shared an island with Indonesia--increased Port Moresby's apprehension about Jakarta's long-range plans. PNG may, in fact, wish to preserve the OPM as a tacit threat to deter potential Indonesian expansionism.

At the present level, the fighting in Irian Jaya is more of an embarrassment than a threat to the Indonesian hold on the province. Jakarta has countered the OPM challenge firmly. The military response of the Indonesian government, however, will not ameliorate

RP AEA 77-009C

[redacted]
17 May 1977

~~Top Secret~~

~~Top Secret~~ [redacted]

the causes of the unrest. Indonesia shows no intention of permitting greater native participation in the local government of Irian Jaya, not to mention the national administration. An accelerated development program is also unlikely. Until the Jakarta government undertakes concrete programs to alleviate the causes of disaffection, sporadic anti-Indonesian incidents can be expected to disrupt Irian Jaya and complicate Indonesian-PNG relations. [redacted]

RP AEA 77-009C

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17 May 1977

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